

DOCUMENT RESUME

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[Close Air Support Test Objectives Should Be Reexamined].  
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Report to Secretary, Department of Defense; by Richard W.  
Gutmann, Director, Procurement and Systems Acquisition Div.

Issue Area: Federal Procurement of Goods and Services:  
Definition of Performance Requirements in Relation to Need  
of the Procuring Agency (1902).  
Contact: Procurement and Systems Acquisition Div.  
Budget Function: National Defense: Weapon Systems (C57).  
Organization Concerned: Department of the Army; Department of  
the Navy; Department of the Air Force.  
Congressional Relevance: House Committee on Armed Services;  
Senate Committee on Armed Services.

The joint Army and Air Force operational test on tactical aircraft effectiveness and survivability in close air support and antiarmor operations (TASVAL) will be delayed 1 year, until the Spring of 1979, because of environmental impact constraints, test instrument limitations, and the scarcity of threat simulators. Although the problems causing the delay are expected to be resolved, the current test plans do not adequately address a principal purpose of the test--to reduce the uncertainties associated with decisions on acquiring new weapons systems for use in close air support. The test objectives are primarily directed toward collecting data on losses of existing air and ground weapons, but, by themselves, these results will not be useful for extrapolation to future aircraft, threats, or different combat environments. The objectives do not examine the target acquisition contribution to the effectiveness and survivability of the attack aircraft. An evaluation plan has not been prepared to show how the test data will be analyzed. The test and evaluation plans should provide for extrapolating the test results to future aircraft and future threats to comply with the purpose of supporting acquisition decisions. Test and evaluation plans should also place greater emphasis on collecting target acquisition and exposure time data with and without current helicopter and air controller aircraft support. (RRS)

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UNITED STATES GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20548

PROCUREMENT AND SYSTEMS  
ACQUISITION DIVISION

June 6, 1978

B-163058

The Honorable  
The Secretary of Defense

Dear Mr. Secretary:

In reviewing Army and Air Force aerial fire support programs, we have learned that the joint operational test on tactical aircraft effectiveness and survivability in close air support anti-armor operations (TASVAL) will be delayed one year until the Spring of 1979. We understand the delay is attributable to environmental impact constraints, test instrument limitations, and the scarcity of threat simulators.

Although the problems causing the delay are expected to be resolved by the time the test is to take place, we are concerned that the current test plans do not adequately address a principal purpose of the test. In authorizing TASVAL, the Under Secretary of Defense for Research and Engineering stated that the test was necessary to reduce the uncertainties associated with decisions on acquiring new weapon systems for use in close air support.

We believe the objectives and scope of the test should be reexamined and the test plans revised to provide data essential to reaching decisions on acquiring these systems. The test could be particularly useful in supporting program acquisition decisions on the Army's AH-64 attack helicopter and Advanced Scout Helicopter (ASH), and the Air Force Forward Air Controller aircraft (FAC-X).

Based upon our discussions with several officials involved with the test and our examination of test documents, we believe the test objectives will do little to reduce weapon system acquisition uncertainties for the following reasons:

1. The objectives are primarily directed at collecting data on losses of existing air and ground weapons. By themselves, these results will not be usable for extrapolation to future aircraft, future threat, or different combat environments.

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2. The objectives do not examine the target acquisition contribution of the scout helicopter and forward air controller aircraft to the effectiveness and survivability of the attack aircraft. Such data would be useful for system acquisition decisions on the ASH and FAC-X programs.
3. An evaluation plan has not been prepared to show how the test data will be analyzed.

We believe your efforts to jointly test Army attack and scout helicopters in conjunction with Air Force A-10 and FAC aircraft could provide valuable information on maximizing their effectiveness in close air support. The concern for the survivability of these aircraft against Soviet air defenses has caused the two Services to independently develop standoff and low altitude tactics. Both Services have also emphasized the need for these aircraft to operate together, and have accordingly cooperated in developing joint tactics. However, these tactics raise questions about the ability of pilots to effectively acquire and strike enemy targets. Also, the claimed synergistic effect of joint employment has not been quantified so as to demonstrate its usefulness.

We recommend that the test and evaluation plans provide for extrapolating the test results to future aircraft and postulated future threats. This would comply with the stated purpose to support acquisition decisions. Although future aircraft systems such as the AH-64, ASH, and FAC-X are unavailable and adequate surrogates apparently do not exist for testing purposes, we understand pertinent data can be collected without additional test instrumentation and with only a slight modification to the collection procedures. This would permit an analytical assessment of future systems.

We recommend that the test and evaluation plans place greater emphasis on collecting target acquisition and exposure time data with and without current scout helicopter and forward air controller aircraft support. We believe this would be useful for determining the contribution of support aircraft to the effectiveness and survivability of attack aircraft.

Copies of this letter are being sent to the House and Senate Armed Services and Appropriations Committees, and the House Government Operations and Senate Governmental Affairs Committees. As you know, Section 236 of the Legislative Reorganization Act of 1970 requires that the head of a

Federal agency submit a written statement of the action taken with respect to these recommendations to (1) the House Committee on Government Operations and Senate Committee on Government Affairs not later than sixty days after the date of this report; and (2) the House and Senate Committees on Appropriations in connection with your first request for appropriations submitted to the Congress more than sixty days after the date of this report.

We would appreciate receiving your comments on these matters within 30 days. Should you desire, we will be happy to discuss the details of our concerns and recommendations with you or your staff.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "R. W. Gutmann". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underlining the name.

R. W. Gutmann  
Director